Nightingale Federation Handwriting Policy 2025-2026

Intent: At the Nightingale Federation, we are ambitious for all pupils to develop fluent, legible and automatic handwriting. We recognise that secure transcription skills underpin successful composition and that physical development is a vital precursor to handwriting.

Implementation: Handwriting is taught explicitly and daily using Read Write Inc. and Nelson Handwriting materials. Teaching is carefully sequenced to secure correct letter formation, joins, spacing and presentation. Teachers model high expectations and use ongoing assessment to revisit and reinforce specific skills for whole classes or targeted groups where necessary.

Impact: Pupils develop a fluent, legible handwriting style that supports writing stamina and composition across the curriculum. Work in books demonstrates consistency, pride and high standards of presentation in line with national expectations.

EYFS:

- In EYFS, children are supported in the earliest stages of writing through purposeful opportunities to develop **gross motor skills and core strength**, including shoulder, elbow, wrist, and trunk stability. A strong core provides the foundation for controlled arm and hand movements, posture, and stamina needed for mark-making and early writing. Adults model and encourage these movements through continuous provision (for example, in 'construction zones'), physical activity, climbing and balancing activities, and intentional play (for example, in 'Forest School' sessions), ensuring children build the physical foundations necessary for successful writing.
- There is also a strong emphasis on developing **fine motor skills**—including hand–eye coordination, finger strength, dexterity, pencil grip, and hand control—which are essential foundations for successful handwriting. This is supported through carefully planned direct instruction and enhanced provision (for example, pattern making, tracing activities, manipulating playdough, and experimenting with classroom tools such as pegs, clips, tweezers, tongs, and threading activities). These opportunities are also embedded across the wider curriculum to ensure children consistently refine the small muscle movements required for precise and controlled writing.
- **Alongside this, children are explicitly taught letter formation within their daily RWI Phonics programme and through the use of Nelson Handwriting resources/materials.**
- Early lessons focus on practising letter movements at different sizes (e.g. in the air or through mark-making), alongside developing correct pencil grip ('birdy fingers'), posture and paper positioning.
- Teaching addresses both accurate letter formation and the physical skills required for effective handwriting.
- Within Read Write Inc, children learn letter formation using picture **mnemonics.**

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The letters are taught in handwriting groups. Children write on plain paper.

- 'Around' letters: **c a o d g q**.
- 'Down' letters: **l t b p k h i j m n r u y**.
- 'Curly' letters: **e f s**.
- 'Zig-zag' letters: **v w z x**.

- Once children can form letters correctly, they learn to place them on the line (wide-lined paper is used)

- Some small letters are called 'boat letters': **a c e i m n o r s u v w x z**.
- Letters that are written below the line are called 'water letters': **g j p q y**.
- Tall letters are called 'sun letters': **b d h k l t f**.

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

- The formation of numbers 0 - 9 are also taught

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Year 1:

Pupils should be taught to:

• sit correctly at a table, holding a pencil comfortably and correctly
• write on the line
• form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place
• understand which letters belong to which handwriting 'families' (i.e. Sets 1 -4: letters that are formed in similar ways)
NB. Once correct formation of individual letters is secured, pupils move to practising diagraphs and trigraphs.
• begin to build consistency in size, shape and orientation when forming lower-case letters
• demonstrate an awareness that the ascender touches the top line and descender falls below the line.
• form capital letters
• form digits 0-9
• leave spaces between words

Set 1

c a o d g q s f e

Set 2

i l t u j y

Set 3

r n m h k b p

Set 4

v w x z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

NB. Teachers will model Nelson formations in English and handwriting lessons but it is to be expected that children will transition from RWI => Nelson formations for *k* **and** *f* **at their own rate.**

Year 2:

Pupils should be taught to:

- continue to build consistency in size, shape and orientation when forming lower-case letters (**Sets 1-4 exemplified in Year 1**)
- ensure the ascender touches the top line and descender falls below the line.
- use spacing between words that reflects the size of the letters
- write capital letters and digits of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters

- ***begin to practise*** using some of the four diagonal and horizontal joins.

The joins

	Group		Group	
The first join	1	→	2	in am
The second join	1	→	3	ab ch
The third join	4	→	2	oa wo
The fourth join	4	→	3	wh ob

NB. The joining groups divide the letters according to how they join to other letters:

The joining groups divide the letters according to how they will join to other letters.

Group 1

a c d e h i k l m n s t u

Thirteen letters with exit flicks plus **s**.

Group 2

a c d e g i j m n o p q r s u v w x y

Nineteen letters which start at the top of the x-height.

Group 3

b f h k l t

Six letters which start at the top of the ascender.

Group 4

f o r v w

Five letters which finish at the top of the x-height.

Years 3 and 4:

Pupils should be taught to:

• ***continue to practise and consolidate*** all four horizontal and diagonal handwriting joins introduced in Year 2:**(See the four joins exemplified in Year 2)**

• understand which are the **'break letters'** - eight letters after which no join is made. (NB. No joins are made to or from z)

The joins

	Group		Group	
The first join	1	→	2	in am
The second join	1	→	3	ab ch
The third join	4	→	2	oa wo
The fourth join	4	→	3	wh ob
The break letters				bigger

The break letters

b g j p q x y z

The joined style

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog

•: increase the legibility, consistency and quality of their handwriting (e.g. ensure downstrokes of letters are parallel and equidistant; lines of writing are spaced sufficiently so that the ascenders and descenders of letters do not touch).

•: start to slant writing slightly to the right to build speed and fluency.

NB. Once formations/joins are secure, pupils will transition to writing in pen.

Years 5 and 6:

Pupils should be taught to:

• continue to practise the difficult joins.

• write legibly, fluently and with increasing speed

• begin to develop an individual style which is legible, clear and fluent

o choosing which shape of a letter to use when given choices

o deciding whether or not to join specific letters

o choosing the writing implement that is best suited for a task.